

PRESS RELEASE

Time to end 14-year Juneteenth delay

Patterson calls for placement of Texas Emancipation statues at Capitol

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AUSTIN — Today, 148 years after African-Americans in Texas learned of their freedom under the Emancipation Proclamation, Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson once again called on state leaders to finally honor the Juneteenth anniversary at the seat of government.

As a state Senator in 1997, Patterson was the Senate sponsor of a bill commissioning a five-statue monument to be placed at the Texas Capitol honoring the day Union officer Gordon Granger read the freedom statement in Galveston.

“This day is about liberty,” Patterson said, “and that is something every Texan should support. Let’s get this done.”

Noting that 14 years have passed since the statues were authorized, Patterson expressed frustration with the bureaucratic hold up.

“How can something this right be so hard to do?” asked Patterson.

The statues have been created, but have not found a permanent home. Disagreements over design of the monument led the Texas Legislature to decommission the work in 2011. But the sculptures remain the property of the state.

One of the statues, of an African-American lawmaker, stands guard in Galveston, overlooking the very spot where Texas Emancipation was first announced. The other four — portraying a preacher, a woman, a farmer, and his daughter — stood outdoors at a foundry in Bastrop, until April of this year. More recently, the statues lay on their sides and wrapped up in a state warehouse in East Austin.

“The back of a government warehouse is no place for monuments to individual liberty,” Patterson said. “Let’s reunite these statues and give Texas Emancipation the public recognition it deserves.”

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